

Welcome to the Event Brew, where event professionals from different backgrounds talk about the latest, most controversial, and interesting topics dominating the minds of the industry right now. This is a candid conversation, the likes of which can only otherwise be found late at night in host hotel lobby bars during industry conferences. So, relax and drop in on what event pros really say when no one else is around. This show is brought to you by Endless Events, the event AV company that tells you how it really is. Now, let's brew something up.

Will Curran:

Hello again, friends. This is Event Brew episode 5. Today, we are talking about some really, really interesting topics. But before we get into it, this is Will Curran from Endless Events.

Nick Borelli:

This is Nick Borelli from Borelli Strategies.

Thuy:

Hi, this is Thuy with PRA Business Events.

Dustin Westling:

Hey friends, this is Dustin Westling with OneWest Events.

Will Curran:

Awesome. All right, before we jump into the topic at hand, what's everybody drinking today?

Nick Borelli:

I have Argo Tea's hibiscus lemonade tea squeeze, a overpriced tea in a glass bottle that tastes pretty good.

Will Curran:

Ooh, I'm proud of you for moving away from the energy drinks.

Nick Borelli:

Oh, I've had a lot of them already. This is wind down time.

Thuy:

I'm drinking Trader Joe's kefir strawberry melt, I guess, or smoothie. But I am lactose sensitive so, we'll see how I feel after the hour is done. What about you? What are you guys drinking?

Dustin Westling:

We're going to check in with you in an hour and see how you're feeling.

Thuy:

Thank you.

Dustin Westling:

I'm sitting in a hotel room, so I'm drinking the complimentary water available from the hotel. It is Aquafina, and it is the taste of purity.

Will Curran:

Wow. Oh my gosh. That sounds like a slogan for something really inappropriate. [crosstalk 00:02:06].

Dustin Westling:

A reverse osmosis. Oh, that's not good.

Will Curran:

I'm drinking some matcha right now. Finally, digging into that match that I picked up at the local tea store a little bit more, so I'm having a nice matcha latte for this week's episode. All right. I hope you guys got your drinks ready because I feel like this is going to be a really in depth episode. Really, I think everyone's got to sit down for this one because we're talking about something that's not very light. I feel like we've talked some light topics about being busy, about our favorite industry strategies for industry events. But we're getting a little intense this week. Nick, you want to talk a little bit about this week's topic?

Nick Borelli:

Yeah. Honestly, we had a bunch of different topics that we were considering for this week. And then Howard Givner, the founder of the Event Leadership Institute, he contacted a number of us in the industry and said, "Hey, I've created this petition. I have no idea if this is something that you believe in or not, but if it is, then consider signing in because we'd like to potentially get some action involved around this topic, which is mass shootings in the event industry, a looming safety and business risks." If you live in the States, this is something that comes up just in a alarming rate and frequency to the degree that complacency and normalization has kind of set in. When was the last mass shooting? I can't remember.

Thuy:

Which is so sad.

Nick Borelli:

There's always another one before it.

Thuy:

We're so numb to it.

Nick Borelli:

But this is taking the angle ... It's the saddening thing, right? Cynicism is the saddest thing. It strips you of all agency. And especially normalization when you consider that these things that should be crazy bizarre. If you look at the percentage that the US deals with to other other

countries, there's a given month that will outstrip a year's worth for other first world countries easily any given month. That's just absurd. The increase of this stuff is topical and it's also, frankly, something that gets a ton coverage. We can talk about the good and the bad of that. I don't know if there's a good around it. But it's definitely top of mind all the time. But the angle that's taken here, I found very interesting, which is to say this is an event industry issue. These are happening at what has been termed, soft targets, live events. They're not installations that have permanent security that are always in place. There's always holes. As you know, there's always things that aren't perfect in live events because the tent goes up and the tent goes down.

Nick Borelli:

It's not like a bank vault or a casino, even though that's probably a bad example. I think that, to me, the biggest part of this that is fascinating as far as action the events industry could take and maybe even roadblocks is, "Is this a political issue or is this a safety issue? Can it be both?"

Will Curran:

I'll lean on the safety side of things, for sure. We've had this conversation about cyber security in the past. Events are, like you said, a soft topic, I think, for sure. Or a soft target, I should say. To be honest, how many events that I've gone to that I've been able to sneak in without any credentials at all is crazy. I'm talking big music festivals where if you wear a black polo and some jeans, and you act like you know what you're doing, people will just let you in. It's terrifying for sure. I think there's a lot of stuff that needs to happen on the industry side of things, which I'm sure we'll talk about. But then I think obviously, like Howard's identified, that this might also be a political issue, that it doesn't have awareness and maybe specific steps being taken forward on it.

Nick Borelli:

I'm fascinated by the idea that the power in our industry as far as bringing people together to have a single voice where one person, one organization, doesn't have enough power to really reach the players who can make a difference. The only people in our industry that probably do are associations, and yet they generally pick topics where there's not any really opposition to it. Howard gives the example human trafficking. In the last two years, there's been a lot of really positive traction from the live events industry, specifically coming out of MPI and PCMA, against the black and white evil of human trafficking. He says this, that no one's for human trafficking. It's not controversial. It's just something that you can actually take on without any opposition other than maybe scarcity of resources and time to focus on it. If you can overcome those things, it's one of those evils that is transparently black and white evil.

Nick Borelli:

Whereas mass shootings ... Obviously, no one's pro mass shooting, but there is a gun lobby in this country and they are powerful. There's definitely pro gun. That really is where the two sides of this Well, probably two sides is making this seem pretty simplistic, where an opposition comes from to any kind of regulatory change, I guess, that would endemically impact these types of events occurring would be on the implement and the tool. And then we get into

legalities and the Constitution. We get into rhetoric and also things that are specifically part of our history and part of the uniqueness of the United States. It's not as black and white. It just isn't.

Will Curran:

I'm curious to know Dustin's perspective as our token Canadian who views the United States from the outside. What's your thoughts?

Dustin Westling:

It's no secret that Canada is blessed to be a very safe to live. We don't come across the same sort of gun violence and mass attacks as the US does. So, it's very jarring when it happens to our neighbors. Obviously, Canadians and Americans are close. We share a lot of commonality. We share a lot of our culture and we have friends on both sides of the border. Coming from a world where you never, ever have to think about these things, when I'm at a festival or when I'm at an outdoor gathering, or I'm in a place with a lot of people, I never have to think about, "Am I in danger?" In my profession, I have to think about, "What if?" I have to think about, "How do we ensure that we can get people out of here? How do we ensure that we can keep people safe?" But I don't have this sort of looming fear. I will say after the Las Vegas shooting, specifically, and I was just in Las Vegas for IMAX with you all, it was on top of my mind.

Dustin Westling:

I was thinking about it. I was thinking about the big groups. You can't help but think, "Oh boy, I can see how a country can get so wrapped into this and how this can create so much fear, and then how exposed everybody is." We have our problems with guns in Canada. I don't know what the stats are, but I can tell you it's a lot less than what's going on in America. A lot of our gun violence really is centered into one part of Canada, which is our biggest metro area. I think that media sure does a good job of being really loud when these things happen. It's really quite scary from a neighbor's perspective.

Nick Borelli:

To me, the news aspect, the coverage aspect of it very cyclical. I think that has an impact on the cause of it and the inspiration of it. We're a country that kind of tries to blur the lines between famous and infamous. You can go to Chicago and you can go to a barber shop, and there's a plaque that said, "Al Capone used to get his hair cut here." And there's a pride with that. He was a mass murderer. History somehow makes that softer, I guess, even though it's not that far away. But we're comfortable with violence. There's a lot of things that we're uncomfortable with that other countries, like specifically European ones, are not. But we're comfortable in violence. Our media is violent. It's funny. I saw in one week, the right side of our country pointed video games as a potential reason for increased violence. And then a movie that's coming out soon called Joker is having the left side say that this is a bad idea, that it'll inspire violence.

Nick Borelli:

So, it's something that, for whatever reason, other countries are able to consume, but maybe not as completely or as frequently, and yet still not result in that kind of impact. But the news aspect of it really is something that scares me. I want, when shooters or mass violence to happen, for the names of those people to be stricken from the books, erased from history.

Male:

I agree.

Nick Borelli:

And they're not. I was looking at that because I'm fascinated with this story around the Joker now because it's at the cross section of a lot of things I'm into. I was looking at the shooter from the Aurora movie theater shooting. That guy, his name has a Wikipedia page. I don't know if anything that that kid could have done with his abilities where the trajectory prior to that, if he would've had one ... Of course, we could all do great things and whatever, but it's pretty rare. But meanwhile, a pretty easy thing to do is to go into a movie theater and shoot people. It's not difficult. It doesn't take years of skill and practice and being the best at something. It's actually pretty easy to do. That's how he got to basically have a legacy and live forever. That's scary.

Nick Borelli:

I think of terrorism in the same bucket and very similarly defined by the idea of having very little in the means of money, resources, talent, whatever it is, and yet being able to make a huge impact, albeit not a positive one. The idea that we placate and facilitate that because of our really crazy curiosity around, "Why did someone do it? What does it say? Et cetera. I think we should worry about the macro problem and not worry about the people themselves.

Will Curran:

I think you bring up a really good point about the fear that it instills. I think a great example of this is the Joker movie. I go see like every movie that comes out and obviously a big DD Comics fan. We were talking about it with group and it got brought up, that article saying how now there's this fear that it's going to happen at the movie, the premiere. It literally made people who wanted to go see the movie say, "I'm going to sit this one out. I'll go see it a week after." Or whatever it may be. I think our industry needs to be aware that whether you think that your event is a target or not, this on the top of attendees' minds. If it continues to happen, it's only going to create more fear. And this is going to severely impact our ability to have hundred thousand person conventions and festivals and things like that. It's going to drive attendance, potentially, down at these events in general. I think the fear is something very, very important to note and to be aware of as an industry.

Nick Borelli:

For people not to want to gather is a scary thing. That's a fundamental societal piece, is gathering. Any kind of fear that would disrupt that especially, I think, when we need a lot more face to face gatherings now than we've ever needed as far as coming to an understanding is concerned, having another blockage of that is terrible. We should be past that. But honestly, I

think that Howard has a really succinct piece on his LinkedIn. It starts with the idea of duty of care, which I think from an event planner, designer thing, it's one of the most important privileges/burden/whatever. Just real things that you have when you're designing and planning events is that you hold the lives of the people attending your events in your hands while they're at your events. You should take into consideration, their physical, emotional, and any other type of safety and make that paramount. That's black and white. You have to that before you can achieve your other goals. I think that that is what we all do and impact that on the micro level, on the event to event level. But what we need to do if things keep occurring, is we need to think about what we can do to make change on a macro level.

Will Curran:

I think the duty of care section is, I think, incredibly important. Again, to go back to fear aspect of it, I think we sometimes forget how much power we have as people in the events industry. It's crazy. For example, I think a lot of times ... I don't think this is at all a similar outbreak in any sort of way, but we had a lot of stage collapses in the AV event production industry for a while. There was a big conversation in the production industry of, "How do we be responsible for it's going to happen?" Basically, the industry decided, "We are going to self police." Because there was no regulations. There was nothing going on, but what ended up happening a lot of times is when we saw stuff we didn't like and we thought was an issue, we did the, "Saw something, say something."

Nick Borelli:

In festivals, there was a streak there where every summer, someone was dying from a stage or a tent collapsing. It just came down to the fact that there were a number of people that were in those professions who weren't fully committed to that as something that matters.

Dustin Westling:

I think the duty of care, and reading through this article, I think it's the most important point that's here for our industry, is truly understanding that it is our responsibility as professionals to keep our attendees safe. I often feel like what happens is ... This is with clients and planners, everybody's just doing the bare minimum to get through whatever the legislation is, "How many exits do I need to get my permit? What do I need to do to get my permit?" I don't know that we're spending as much time as we should, really thinking about situations that could occur and really thinking about how we can build environments that are safe for our attendees. Unfortunately, it takes these sort of incidents ... Vegas again, being the most recent one that happened in my mind, before we start looking at the buildings around us and saying, "Okay. Well, what happens if this happens?" I do think as I read through this, everyone understanding their duty of care is really important. Every single person, every professional that touches an event or gathering shares the responsibility of that duty of care. It's not in the hands of one person. It's in the hands of everyone.

Thuy:

Just to talk on that, living in Vegas and hearing about the 2017 Route 91 festival that happened, I knew a couple event colleagues that were there. At the time, I was actually back in home state of Massachusetts. It was actually in middle of the night. I just started getting all these text messages asking, "Are you okay? It was scary. I actually think I cried because, at that point, it was just mayhem. We as event professionals ... I think it's like what Dustin was saying, it's like a checklist. We need to get that permit, but we need more deeper thinking. We need more brainpower when we go into, if anything, the safety because this is a topic. This is our responsibility just as well as creating those memorable experiences. Keeping people safe should be number one out of all of that. I know that's not sexy. Any time there's a safety discussion, people kind of have negative reaction towards it, but it's so important because it's one of those things that we take for granted. It's kind of like our health, until it actually happens and we feel unsafe ... That's an issue.

Thuy:

Actually, I will say a positive from this because I know this is going to be a really deep conversation that we have, is a positive from the Las Vegas event that happened is the event industry actually came together in that city. While people were donating blood, the line was out the door. There was a lot the entertainment partners that would just go and entertain for free, singers and performers. I thought that that was incredible. If anything, it brought the community together. And so if anything, it's my little positive insight on that. Howard's article, it opened up with the Las Vegas festival. It's definitely something to remember. I agree with Nick. When we are just so numbed by hearing this constantly, especially in the US where I can't even keep up, but it definitely affects live events. Nick, you make a good point about especially associations. I'm part of the Los Angeles chapter of ILEA. Is that something we think about? Yes, maybe on a smaller scale when we're grinding. Like, "Oh, we can open lit candles." Or, "That table's too close to the doors. We have to look at emergency exits." And things like that. But are we really just taking another double check, triple check on something like that?

Dustin Westling:

Switching gears to the business risk, I had an opportunity at a marketing conference to listen to ... I think it was the CMO the Las Vegas Tourism Bureau. They were talking about the risk to business and the impact that these things have on a city that relies conferences and meeting and tourism. It was really fascinating to see how that business unit had to react to this situation, how they had to support the incident as it was happening. And then the really hard road after that to decide, "When was it business as usual? How to you support a community? How do you ensure that the hundreds of thousand of people that rely on the tourism industry continue to get supported, and make sure there's still jobs for them?" I thought the conversation was very, very enlightening. Of course, when you think of Vegas, you think of that sort of business impact. But I'm wondering, outside of the obvious, does anybody have any sort of story or know of any other big business impacts that come from these types of incidents?

Will Curran:

Well, I think one of the examples of this ... I'm sorry I keep bringing it back to this one, but when I was first getting into production, this obviously was going on. But let's just think about the insurance implications, that if this continues to happen, every event is going to have to that huge cost of insuring for when this happens. Let's be honest. Insurance companies don't look at hyper specific things. For example, when we get our insurance every year to cover our costs, they don't say, "Oh, are you a festival company?" Or, "Are you a corporate company or are you doing just breakouts?" They say, "Oh, you're a production?" Boom, "This could potentially happen. This stage collapse could ever happen to you.: They're very, very unforgiving. I think that's one thing, on the business aspect, is the rising cost of insurance now.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, there's that event to event cost for sure. There's the macro cost of the entire country being of a riskier proposition. I deal in conferences a lot. In that instance, you're numbers of years out, so the impact, it could actually be something that we don't see for quite some time. It'd be hard to come back from it as well because once you get the idea that there's plenty of great places to meet ... And probably to the benefit of countries like Canada, they go there and meet there, and the opportunities to have there ... I see that, I suppose. I see a lot of training costs potentially, kind of slash hopefully. But still, if it's the Wild West and there's all these opportunities for people to have whatever type of armament or whatever fundamental issues actually causing all of this, then yeah, there's going to be some hard costs associated with the type of training that you'll have to have with team members in order to reduce those risks for things like insurance. I don't know. I could see security volume increasing. Without a solution that is going to impact the entire land, there's no really way that there's not costs reduced and also opportunities wasted. Will, you know something about Comic Cons.

Will Curran:

Yeah.

Nick Borelli:

I've been going to them since the '90s and I can tell you that, anecdotally, the presence of security, it's very obvious. Things some safety feeling in that, for sure. But I also think about labor and I'm like, "Man, there's a lot of labor here."

Will Curran:

That was kind of the story I wanted to share real quick. I think there was a very deep dive into it on Event Icons. I'll share the link, and the resources section for everyone to go watch that episode where we interviewed the planners behind it. I don't know the exact number of what it is, but I've had conversations with them in the behind the scenes, talking about how they ended up having a potential active shooter. A guy showed up with a gun, and the police did their job. Everyone did a really great job, and they were able to stop the guy. But it was after he walked inside of the event and was on his way to go kill someone. What ended up happening was their security costs went up astronomically. I don't know the exact percentage. Maybe it's in the

episode. It was absurd, like 4000%. They went from, "We'll have one security guard every door." To, "We have to have 20 at every door. We have to have metal detectors, full bag searches."

Will Curran:

You don't even look at the business aspect of it. Obviously, that's a huge cost. They almost had to flip their budget to go towards security. But the part that no one really thought about was the attendee aspect and how it affected their business because what ended up happening is the lines to get into the event ... They had to go through metal detectors, huge bag searches. You're talking like a hundred thousand people coming in every single day when they're used just walking in, all wearing costumes, some with fake weapons. We can go on all day long, but basically, it led people, waiting out in the Arizona sun in the middle of summer when it's a hundred degrees, waiting for four or five hours sometimes to get into the event. You know what happened? Less people came the next year. They were pissed. They didn't want to come. It took that event to reinvent itself and really think about it, really regain the trust of their attendees.

Will Curran:

But imagine if just everyone decided not to come, and it put that entire event out of business. That would've destroyed the downtown Phoenix event economy because that was the single largest event in the middle of the dead summer of a market that was in its slow season. You just look at that, how one person literally could've done that, and how it nearly killed the event, but also had a big impact. All those jobs, the AV companies, the photo booth companies and things like that, all the vendors who were showcasing and making a living off of that event. It's just the ripple effects.

Dustin Westling:

In Canada ... I live in Alberta specifically. The community has a really awesome partnership with the local police. The local police get heavily involved in all large scale events. You often see a very large police presence when there's big gatherings, and it's very, very well organized. The one thing that they do, and our city is they make is very easy for you to communicate with the police service, and have them deploy resources without it being so cost prohibitive that you don't. I know that one of the efforts they make is they want event producers to be more open with them about what's going to be taking place, who's going to be there, how is the event going to go down, if you will. They provide a tremendous, tremendous amount of support. I do think that that makes a difference, having less guards and more of a police and communicate presence. I'm not sure if that's a normal thing in the States, but definitely something that my part of Canada is really involved.

Thuy:

I'm glad you mentioned that, Dustin, because not that I think about it ... Or at least I've experienced, when we have big events with our clients ... There's been two times I can remember where the company security team was the on the site inspection. I actually, if anything, see that more and more than what I used to, which is a good sign. One thing I actually

do want to talk about and that really took me by surprise in the mass shooting article that Howard wrote is, "Where is the industry voice?" I'll read it, "We have a voice when we want to use it. The movement to fight human trafficking has recently brought support at the highest level." That's actually a good point because with PRA, we definitely received training and emails in regards to that. What are we doing as our individual companies as an industry, to ... I don't know how to explain it because I know with PRA ... I can only talk from my experience, but we have a emergency preparedness internal document. It's especially important to our event producers, the ones that have to be on site.

Thuy:

Actually, we have a book about it. We actually went through training and regards to it. If a client ever needs it or wants a copy, they can have it. Right now, it's really all internal, but it goes over what happens when things like that occur. I wonder ... I know it's saved in our file, if there is a mass shooting portion of it. Now, I'm really curious.

Dustin Westling:

Where I am in Canada, we have our, what's called, COR, Certificate of Recognition Safety program. That's the highest acknowledgement that you can have for a safety program. It's rigorous. It's so much work to get it. There's not a lot of companies like mine in Canada that have it. A part of that program is, just what you were you saying, Thuy, having a emergency preparedness plan. All of our employees from our finance manager all the way down to our drivers and our onsite staff all go through the same training. They're all given the same information on how to react a very, very large array of incidents. Now, that we're talking about this, I contact don't know that active shooter is in that, but when I get home, I'm going to go look and see if it is. But we've made the choice to be a COR certified company and to prepare and educate our staff in this. But having those details deployed is a part of the program. It's a government run program. I think that it's really important. It's so easy to look at all the things that are there and think, "That's never going to happen." And when it does, you sure are glad that you're prepared and you have that information.

Thuy:

Actually, we might a little bit off topic in regards to mass shooting. But in regards to safety, right before we started recoding ... Dustin, actually, this is geared towards you because I know you're on the board of governments for ILEA. I always thought that one of our 10 core disciplines, safety was involved in one of that because I remember I was the VP of programs education, we did do a safety talk. Then I wanted to find the resource, but it's not. It's event planning entertainment creative services rentals, tenting, food and beverage, event décor, technical production, speaker management, and venue. But I'm curious on why safety isn't on there. I think that's really important.

Dustin Westling:

What you're talking about is our core curriculum. Right?

Thuy:
Yeah.

Dustin Westling:

You're right. It's something that isn't there and it really should be there. I think this conversation will spark that question. I will go and ask it for you, and we'll figure out why it's not there and why it's not been a focus.

Thuy:
Proactive.

Nick Borelli:

Some of the disciplines in that core curriculum do definitely focus on safety to different extents. One of them that I can think of specifically is tenting because while there's probably not as much a volume of, let's, say memberships in the association that are focused on that, that's one of the ones where I was like, "Oh, I understand why there's a core curriculum dedicated to this." Because when a ... I'm making a broad generalization for mostly flippancy here, so I apologize. But most of the time, the things the DJ does at the events don't result in someone potentially dying, versus tenting, it's kind of black and white. If you don't at least have your core competencies figured out, the whole thing comes down on everyone versus maybe you didn't play the right song. Again, being flippant, I'm sure there's things you can do. You can tie power lines to a waterline or something like that as a DJ. You have just as much ability to hurt people, I guess, as the other people do. But for that one, it's so transparency obvious why a core curriculum dedicated to that profession.

Nick Borelli:

What's interesting about that is it's not about, "Here's the best ways to be the best at that." It's more of a, "Here is the mandatory things that you need to be competent at that." Safety is not about being best. It's about black and white competency. You either are safe or you aren't. There's no, "Well, you're not safe, but you're really great." You have to at least be safe. It's a bare minimum.

Will Curran:

I wanted to talk a little bit more about also the industry voice and highlight some very specific things that Howard talks about in his article, if that's okay with you guys. One interesting thing is he talks about a little bit about, "Hey, we, as an industry, have to get together to do this." And that there was, as you talked about, this huge fight against human trafficking for the industry and, "Now, look at what we're doing." But people sometimes say, "Well, how does our industry have an impact?" Or, "How do we have any sort of voice in doing this?" I think the three examples that he uses is e really interesting. The three examples are when Indiana passed a religious freedom law, noted by the case of a baker who refused a gay wedding client on religious grounds. The convention industry had a backlash, and then made them rethink it. That's an example of our industry getting together. Another example is when North Carolina

passed a bathroom bill requiring transgender people to use the restroom of their birth certificate gender. A number of organizations pulled their events. Boom.

Nick Borelli:
The All Star game-

Nick Borelli:
... for the NBA as an example, that's a huge event for a city. That law basically deprived the events industry of the income of all the micro events in addition to the large that is the NBA All Star game. For a community, that's a significant thing. I remember when that happened, thinking, " Man, why is it the events industry that always gets hit on these kind of things?" Because they're not necessarily the ones making that decision. But I do understand with voting with your wallet. I think it's important for organizations. Frankly, I think it's going to come up more and more because there really are no actions that are apolitical anymore. Every action has some sort of political ramifications.

Will Curran:
I want to pivot into section about the impact of open carry laws. This is maybe where we start to get into the the deciding factor of what you believe as far as laws go with guns. But I want to see what your guys' thoughts were on this specific section. Also, a little bit curious as far as Dustin's perspective as well from Canadian laws directly, and what his thoughts are on open carry laws.

Dustin Westling:
In Canada, there's licensing and registration of firearms. All firearms have to be registered. I think that's the same in the States.

Male:
Yes.

Dustin Westling:
We classify nonrestricted, restricted, and prohibited. As far as I know, and somebody I'm sure will comment if I'm wrong, there's no open carrying in Canada at all. We're actually going through a federal election right now. There's a political party that wants to take all of Canada's guns and put them in a vault. And you have to sign them out if want them and then bring them back. I know we're not the most strictest-

Will Curran:
A library?

Dustin Westling:
Basically, yeah. It would all go into a storage facility.

Will Curran:

Wow.

Dustin Westling:

And you would put in a request to take your gun...

Thuy:

That would be mayhem in the US.

Dustin Westling:

... bring it back. Obviously, this is party that's not likely to get elected, but it would be mayhem in any country. I get it, but it would be mayhem. I actually don't know where Canada stands in the world when it comes to its laws. I know that what we're doing, it must be working to some degree because we don't have as much gun violence. We definitely have some, but I don't think I've ever seen a gun in Canada. No, never, besides on police officers and security staff. That's my Canadian input. I'm going to...

Will Curran:

Thuy, Nick, do you guys have any thoughts?

Nick Borelli:

There's no way I don't get freaked out if I'm at an event and I see a guy with a AK slung around his shoulder, ordering Starbucks at the conference hall. That's legal in a lot of places. It doesn't happen because it's absurd, but we're living in a world where absurd political gestures are made frequently. We're also living in, I guess, a time of heightened fear based on awareness, a hyper awareness maybe, of violent acts. Nothing surprises me anymore, so that wouldn't be like, "Well, how could that happen? Someone could just choose to do that if it was legal?" For venues, part of my job when I was running a venue was I had to tell people that they no longer could drink anymore this evening. It's up there in some of the hardest things you can do in live events in my opinion.

Male:

Totally.

Nick Borelli:

It takes training, of which, I've gone through quite a bit of it. A friend of mine, Dave Lombardo 00:42:53 who's also on the Search Board board, we talk a little bit about it. He's actually an instructor with the national organization, or maybe potentially international, Tips 00:43:01. I don't know. Do you have Tips in Canada?

Dustin Westling:

Yeah, we have a version of it.

Nick Borelli:

It teaches you how to cool people down and all these other tactics. But I'm going to tell you, if I have to shut somebody down on the bar in the absolutely irrational place that they are in often in that position, and yet they have a firearm, I take pause. I consider that to be a really heightened time. That's something that happens at every wedding. Somebody gets cut off at every wedding for sure. I don't go to as many as I used to based on my accelerated age because I like to think I'm the oldest person in the world now and when I'm on this show as I'm the only one who knows who Benny Hill. But yeah, every single wedding, at least in my experience, has something who has drank too much. If that's also the person who has a gun, that's no fun. Or Howard gives an example of someone at registration complaining about something there. It just escalates a situation where they have a piece of machinery designed to kill.

Nick Borelli:

Again, I know people who are really passionate about the idea that guns are ... I don't know, I guess the word is safe. It's not my number one battle in this world. That said, I don't a hundred percent get it, don't own them. I also have very little fear in my life. I don't think anyone's going to hurt me. That's my default position. I generally feel like most things are overblown and most things are less scary than people make them out to be. I choose not to be governed by fear, so I feel that a lot of times, firearms and walking around with them all the time, or whatever it is, ends up being like a, "Yeah, but what if someone comes for your kids in your home?" And you're like, "That's probably never going to happen." When I say probably, I mean I'm much more worried about lightning, much more worried about lighting. I don't know.

Nick Borelli:

I think ultimately, the X factor and the emotional safety of people being around and literally triggered by the sight of guns as a tool of violence will have a impact on live events in places where it's legal that really, I would assume, by design ... As we design experiences, it's not one of the emotions that we try to program for.

Thuy:

I'm going to jump in here and just speak.

Dustin Westling:

Go for it, Thuy.

Thuy:

I was like, "Unless Dustin wants to say anything." My thoughts on this is I can admit I'm not an expert in this topic. One thing that really shocked me is in this article it says, "Currently, 44 US states allow open carry of long guns or rifles and shoguns. Further, 31 states allow open carry of handguns with no permit required while another 15 states require some permits or liscings 00:46:28." There's a source for that. I'm just boggled by that because this whole time I'm ... If anything this is a really big learning experience in hearing everyone's perspective because I really don't think about that. For the profession I do, I always have to be in a big city. I'm always attending these festivals and all these major events that are more prone to something like that

happening. I don't know. Well, obviously I do need to educate and read into this a little bit more, but I'm a little torn too.

Thuy:

I don't know if I can compare this, apples to apples. But it just reminds me ... When I was in the cheerleading world, we had a lot of ... Especially the teams that were in the southern states, they would actually pray before they competed. Or if went to go attend or go to any of their practices, that was the thing they did regularly. I don't know if I should say that, but taking a stand ... There's a petitions right now to prevent gun violence at events, but how do we do that? Because especially in the US, there's so many different gun laws in the States. But on the flip side, if I actually saw ... That would actually be triggering to me if someone into an event ... Not even talking about attending, but if I were designing an event and someone came in with a rifle, I would actually be really scared.

Thuy:

That would definitely invoke fear in me because it's like, "Well, why do you have that? Do you have the right then?" What Dustin was saying, I only see guns on security and policemen. But to see an attendee with a gun is scary. I don't know. That's just my thoughts. For those who are listening that aren't experts on this topic, it's also okay. I want to just also acknowledge that. Us four that's talking from all these different perspectives ... It's definitely something to be discussed and especially when we say have a voice in this. But definitely do your research. I feel like I'm even uncovering a lot of things as we're going through this. Go ahead, Dustin.

Dustin Westling:

The first article I was reading, I found a little glaring error in it, so I didn't want to go down the list of restrictions in Canada and not have the best information. In Canada, all gun owners have to be licensed. All handguns and semiautomatic weapons have to registered. Handguns can't be carried out of the home, either concealed or openly except with a specific license, which is usually only given to people who need a gun for work. Licenses require training in gun safety and an extensive background check. Guns have to be kept locked and unloaded at all times. That is a federal ... That doesn't go province by province, or state by state for you Americans. That is the law across the entire country. il Canada, as you can imagine, it makes it a lot easier to produce and plan because you're not dealing with state laws, and you're dealing with one set of laws that applies to everybody. I just thought I would make sure that was clear.

Will Curran:

Just to clarify, you said that has to locked and unloaded at all times?

Dustin Westling:

Yes. You have to keep your gun unloaded and it needs to be locked within in your home. You can't just leave it in your sideboard. You can't just leave it in a cupboard. It has to be in a gun safe.

Male:

Very interesting.

Dustin Westling:

Which obviously is a great way to keep kids from taking your guns, which is another horrible, horrible reality.

Will Curran:

All right, guys. Well, do we want to start ... Sorry.

Nick Borelli:

It's heavy stuff, right? Jeez. I feel like that the issue with this is maybe ... If I had a conversation with a passionate gun advocate, I think that they would probably have some points because ... Just not to play devil's advocate, because there's significant volume of people. It's not just going to be pure nonsense. I think that when it comes to just the lane, specifically, of live events, we should be able to have potentially maybe something that we can do to create some barriers because we in the gatherings business and putting people together is really where the shootings become mass shootings, and especially when targets are weaker because the infrastructure is not permanent. I don't know. That's the stuff that I really hope would be as neutral as we could possibly be, politically, and just say from an events perspective, "We are really interested in finding ways that don't fringe on people's rights that they hold dear. But also, we are hyper concerned safety as it pertains to putting people together." And the ... "What's the word I'm looking for? The responsibility associated with that is very high.

Nick Borelli:

At the very least, while the rest of the world figures this stuff out, we have maybe a heightened way to deal with this that ... It would be admittedly more strict, but mostly because of the fact that we're designers. To say that we want to design experiences that make people feel a certain way more if we all agree that, as designers, we don't want people to feel any sort fear, then reducing the variables that creates situations where things can happen would that. Again, I think I know the retort on the other side, which is say, "Well, a responsible gun owner in a group of people who are targets where a person coming from the outside is irresponsible puts down that person." I would argue that that responsible person would best be a professional security person hired for that reason exclusively. We have the ability to do that. In your home, you're probably not going to position a security person 24 hours a day, so I can understand that idea of, "You want to protect your family." I get it.

Nick Borelli:

At an event, I would say to reduce the variables that cause those types of problems, maybe we have a paid professional person exclusively in that role.

Will Curran:

Well, I think there's a lot of really good moving forward steps that Howard illustrates inside of his article as well. I figured would highlight them ... If you guys have any comment on them ... And then talk a little, I think, about the what the things that we can do as individuals. There's two policies-

Thuy:

That's the other way around actually.

Will Curran:

... that Howard proposes ...

Thuy:

Yeah, the Canadians are the ones that apologize.

Will Curran:

... that we publicly support make a huge impact. Sorry, Dustin. These are primarily American-

Thuy:

That's what Greta said.

Will Curran:

... initiatives, so we apologize as always for everything.

Nick Borelli:

Why are you the apologizers? We should be the apologizers.

Will Curran:

Can I get a...

Dustin Westling:

Well, remember this, we're your neighbors and we're watching and learning. This is not at the heart of Canadians' mind, but everything that you're going through is something that we're learning from, so no apology needed. I'm sorry you're sorry.

Will Curran:

All right. The two policies that Howard proposes that we publicly support are the institute universal background checks. By having the senate pass bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 H.R.8, which passed the house of representatives on February 27th, 2019-

Thuy:

I was about to make that comment.

Will Curran:

... this would close the gun show loophole, which exempts private sales from standard background checks. According to the statistic that he shares, 90% of Americans support this according to a Fox News poll. That's the first section.

Thuy:

Wow, 90% of Americans from a Fox News poll, so that's at least a hundred.

Will Curran:

Solid. All right. The number two policy initiative that he also suggests that publicly support is reinstate the federal assault weapons ban, which he says also covers high capacity magazines that expired in 2004. Weapons of war should be reserved for the military, police, and other properly trained security forces, and says that 70% of Americans support this according to POLITICO/Morning Consult poll. What are you guys' thoughts on those initiatives? Thumbs up, thumbs down?

Thuy:

Especially the second one, I would say I highly agree and on that side. Listening to the democratic debate, O'Rourke talks really passionate about that. I don't feel like everyday Americans should carry weapons that were made to kill people. That right then and there, I understand protecting your household and hunting and things like that, but we don't need AK-47s. I don't want one of those in my home to begin with, and so that one, I'm highly in agreement with.

Nick Borelli:

It's funny. There was a time where the initial law that all of this is about made sense. That was time when our American government was founded on the idea that it probably wouldn't last more than about 10 years. Everyone had muskets and they wanted to give the people the opportunity to assassinate their leaders as they did. The people that I see that are really passionate gun advocates because they want to make sure that they had the means to keep their oppressive government from them, I'm like, "Cool. You guys know that means you get to kill people in the armed service and police, right? Support your troops and thin blue line, but those are the people you want to kill if things go the other way." I don't see them doing that. I don't know how the idea of having a bunch of weapons to keep your government scared is a real thing when the government has drones and all these other crazy things. Then it just comes down to the fact that about ownership because you can and freedom as a general idea. I don't know. I think that these two laws are super easy. They're low barrier. They're in the right direction. It still blows my mind that the driver's license is harder to get. Did I go too far?

Will Curran:

No, never too far. That's what this show's all about, is the opinions base of everything. But I think speaking of opinions versus facts and everything like that ... First of all, thank you guys for sharing so many facts and doing the research as we did this, but Howard brings out a really, really good point, that if you're on the fence about any of this sort of stuff, whether it's us, gun

law, industry lobbyists, politicians, whoever it is, just go out and get the facts. Look at the data, similar to the way we did and just make your own decisions. I think that's one of the best things that we can do. Just get the data and the facts and help that lead where you're going with everything.

Nick Borelli:

Bottom line is that the safety of attendees is our hands. It's a responsibility. It's an obligation. We don't just get to do the pretty, fun stuff. Obviously, we know that there's a lot hard work associated with what we do. All of that effort to meet the goals of all the stakeholders and also the power of bringing people together should not be undermined by things like fear. We need to figure out a way not, I guess, galvanize around some barest versions of safety regulations no matter how political it feels, and make a decision to act in the way that our conscience guides us.

Dustin Westling:

Nick, that was really well said and I couldn't agree with you. Here's some things that you can do. I'm assuming that we're going to link this article to this podcast somehow. Wil, that's correct?

Will Curran:

That is a hundred percent correct. We'll not only share all the links of the article, but also any of the stuff that we talked about so far, too, additional content to look at and everything like that.

Dustin Westling:

Awesome. at the very bottom of the article that we've talking about today, there is a link to sign a petition to prevent gun violence at events as for all of you ... I guess anywhere that you're listening to this. I don't think this is specifically an American thing, but contact your elected officials or your soon to be elected officials or whoever it is that's in yourthat makes the decisions on behalf of you. Let them know how these issues affect your events and your business, and speak out and start conversations. Find information that is legitimate.

Thuy:

Absolutely.

Dustin Westling:

And form an opinion and have conversations with others, and keep this conversation going.

Will Curran:

Definitely, I think keep the conversation going. One of the big thing it says is that, speak out. Share your concerns on social media, email editor of industry publications and talk to your association leaders. I think that's one of the best things you can do. To kind of to put a bow on everything and tie it all together, definitely let us know what you thought about this conversation, and speak out and reach out to us, Eventbrew@helloendless.com or hashtag Event Brew. Literally, big shouts to everybody who tags us in all your social media posts, and has opinions

and thoughts on how we have expand on this. We want to hear you guys and start this conversation, and keep it going. Even if it's not on the opinion on the show per se, but you're having this conversation, tag Event Brew on it. That way, we can follow along and see what industry also is saying as well. Just get that voice heard and get it out there.

Thuy:

I'm so glad you said that, Will, because it's true. Really, engage with us and talk about this. At the end of Howard's article on LinkedIn, I want to also note Meeting and Conventions in [Bishbash 01:01:54] has versions of this. The Northstar Meeting Group has an article that is Urgent Wake Up Call, Mass Shooting in the Meetings Industry. And Bishbash has one called Opinions, Why Event Professionals Need to Mobilize Against Gun Violence. We should add definitely add those to the links too because I think a lot of people when they say, "Okay, what is next?" Or, "Where are those resources?" It's important that we provide those because that's what we're reading. We're keeping up to date in order to discuss conversations like this.

Will Curran:

All right. You guys okay with me taking us home, taking her home?

Thuy:

Take it home.

Will Curran:

All right. Well, thank you everyone. Thank you, Thuy, Nick, Dustin. Thank you guys for such a awesome conversation, being super vulnerable for us to have such a ... I can't even use the right word.

Male:

Calm.

Will Curran:

Controversial and a calm conversation about this as well. This was definitely a big pickup as you guys all saw from our normal pace. But Dustin, Nick, Thuy, thank you so much. Absolutely amazing conversation.

Thuy:

Thank you.

Nick Borelli:

You too.

Dustin Westling:

Thanks.

Will Curran:

All right. We're going to take you guys home. If you enjoyed this episode, you know what to do. Go to eventbrew.com. That's where you're going to catch all the show notes to all the articles, oh my gosh, so many that we mentioned, and a link to the petition, where you can sign, a bunch of other things too that were mentioning and finding as we went along. We'll share all that down below. Also, get the transcript. Also, if you are listening to us for first time and you're listening maybe on a blog, or you're listening on one of the amazing podcasting platforms, Apple Podcast, Pocket Casts, Google Play, Spotify, if you just go to Eventbrew.com, that's where all the links are to subscribe. You might find that there might be a better platform for you to listen to because we do this every week. And so be prepared for more awesome contests.

Will Curran:

Again, contact us. We want to hear from you guys. Hashtag Event Brew, Eventbrew@helloendless.com. Give us a shout. But most importantly, thank you guys all for listening. You guys are the ones that make the difference. We appreciate you listening and hearing what we have to say. We'll catch you guys all next time for the Brew Crew in the house. Have a great day. We'll see you next time on Event Brew.

Announcer:

Thanks again for listening to Event Brew. Be sure to rate and review us on your favorite podcasting app. Also, be sure to head to eventbrew.com and leave us a comment about this week's episode. See you next time on Event Brew.

Thuy:

Bye.

Male:

Bye.

Male:

Bye.

Will Curran:

Bye.